

HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION 491  
By Hargrove

A RESOLUTION to honor the memory of Mrs. Joan Pitt Rew  
Derryberry of Cookeville.

WHEREAS, members of this General Assembly were saddened to learn of the death of a distinguished and beloved Tennessean, Mrs. Joan Pitt Rew Derryberry of Cookeville; and

WHEREAS, she will live eternally in the hearts and minds of many, as she was an avid supporter of the arts, community leader, dedicated wife and mother, and first lady of Tennessee Technological University; and

WHEREAS, Mrs. Derryberry began her meritorious life in Devonshire, England; she held music degrees from Britain's Royal College and the Royal Academy of Music in London, as well as certificates from the British Society of Art Masters; and

WHEREAS, she taught piano at Oxford University in Oxford, England, prior to meeting her future husband, Everett Derryberry, a native of Columbia, Tennessee, who at that time was a distinguished Rhodes Scholar in Graduate Studies at Oxford; and

WHEREAS, upon marrying her husband in 1933, Mrs. Derryberry moved to the states and began her life as an American citizen; she began teaching piano and music history at Tennessee Technological University in the 1940s, while her husband served as the University's president; and

WHEREAS, along with her husband, the longest serving Tennessee Tech president, Mrs. Derryberry made countless contributions to the school and university life; her generous contributions to the arts and music there will not soon be forgotten; and

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WHEREAS, Tennessee Tech's first lady gave unreservedly of her time and talents to promote fine arts and culture on campus; she composed the University's hymn, helped to form the school's symphony orchestra, and had chimes, similar to those at Oxford University in England, installed in the University's clock tower, which still play every hour; and

WHEREAS, described as one of the "finest, most gracious" people he knew, current Tennessee Tech President Angelo Volpe remarked that the passing of Mrs. Derryberry "truly marks the end of an era in the history of Tennessee Tech"; President Volpe further lamented that "we'll miss her warm smile, wonderful personality and dedication to this campus and entire community"; and

WHEREAS, her dedication to the promotion of arts and culture was not confined to the Tennessee Tech campus; she was widely recognized throughout the Cookeville community, the state and our nation for her numerous kind contributions; and

WHEREAS, Mrs. Derryberry was a founding member of the Tennessee Arts Commission, the premier arts organization in our great state, and served as a board member for Cheekwood Botanical Gardens and the Tennessee Art League; she is also credited with founding the Art and Drama Association in Cookeville, now the Children's Theatre, and the Cumberland Art Society; and

WHEREAS, with a charming British accent and a wealth of knowledge to share, she was a popular public speaker; she spoke to audiences at numerous state colleges and school commencements, women's organizations, government groups and private clubs; and

WHEREAS, Mrs. Derryberry was once called to open a series of state rallies in aid of the Christian Rural Overseas Program sponsored by the United Nations, an endeavor that took her to many states to speak, including West Virginia, Ohio and Illinois; and

WHEREAS, in recognition of her exemplary efforts, the campus art gallery at Tennessee Tech was named for this distinguished citizen in 1996, and 80 of her own paintings were displayed for the inaugural exhibition in what is now known as the Joan Derryberry Art Gallery; and

WHEREAS, in addition to her musical talents and love for the arts, Mrs. Derryberry was an exceptional visual artist herself; her works are displayed in various locations throughout our state and nation; and

WHEREAS, since 1933, she had enjoyed the loving companionship of her husband, Everett Derryberry, who preceded her in death; the Derryberry's were the proud parents of one son, Dr. Walter Derryberry of Cookeville; and one daughter, June Derryberry Walker of Brownsville; and

WHEREAS, the Derryberrys were blessed with four grandchildren: Brandon Walker of Nashville; Allison Tomes of Ft. Worth, Texas; Douglas Derryberry of Arlington, Virginia; and Pitt Derryberry of Tuscaloosa, Alabama; and three great-grandchildren; and

WHEREAS, it is only appropriate that this body express its heartfelt condolences to the family and many friends of this exceptional lady; although Mrs. Derryberry has relinquished this life for a far better existence, it is assured that she will be fondly remembered as a great Tennessean; now, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE ONE-HUNDREDTH GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF TENNESSEE, THE SENATE CONCURRING, That we hereby pause to mourn the death of Mrs. Joan Pitt Rew Derryberry, while also celebrating the life of this woman whose many successes and selfless contributions to Tennessee Tech, the Cookeville community and our great state will be remembered for years to come.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, That appropriate copies of this resolution be prepared for presentation with this final resolving clause omitted from such copies.